

# GRADING OUR IMPORTS TO SAVE SHIPS

New War Bureau With Fingers in Every Port Diverts Traffic to Provide Transports

By Ralph Block

THERE are plenty of such rooms in Washington. Those long, low buildings that went up like magic early this year, where the American business man can be found at his most typical quality, are full of them. But this is, after all, a room by itself. True, it hardly discloses itself. It is emptier than most of them, has less of the extensive forestry of business to hide and impede what is going on. A desk and two tables are at one end, trade charts of world routes done in Mercator's projection hang on the bare walls; there is a settee.

But it is a room that can afford to be silent. Its works proclaim it. Its homely atmosphere is of the very stuff of riches, not mere coins or currency, but produced wealth, drawn from every quarter of the known earth. The month of May saw the passage of \$680,000,000 worth of goods through it. With the faintest outlay of imagination you may catch in it the scent of Sumatra spices, see at the end of one of its radiations a dirty, merchandised wharf in some strange Malay port, conjure out of it Indian ivory, teakwood forests, Chinese lacquers. It is a room for stern business, but nothing can put off the romantic connotations of it. It is the Bureau of Imports of the War Trade Board, and every ounce of foreign materials must come here vicariously for approval before American gates will open to it.

## Seeking Some

### Simple Conclusion

It is an amazing world now, this one of war. It complicates itself chiefly to produce simplicity. You can be sure that wherever you find it is most intricate it is to produce triumphantly in the end some simple conclusion, some contenting ordering of facts. The War Trade Board is doing exactly that. The facts are the ships that sail all the seven seas, the wares the world wants, coming out of jungles and mines and waters and manufactories everywhere.

In the careless prodigality of peace not much need arose for order. Ships could load, clear and sail much as they pleased, within the affable limits of international practice. The earth thrived, traded, bartered, made; grew and sold and bought. It was a pieced-up system, patched here, spliced there, stretched without much difficulty, as long as there was a reasonable honesty about the stretching.

What could smash this amiable order of things except the ugly face of piracy? And it was piracy of a sort that did it. . . . German piracy. The subject is involved, but at least war hadn't come without the instant realization that international trade would need definite checks upon it, from a central source, if our own purposes and ends of the fight were to be served rather than the ends of the enemy. There are a lot of these checks now. But the one that chiefly concerns this commentary is the check upon imports.

## A Check on the Enemy's Needs

Exports are obvious enough. The enemy needs what we can supply. He must have it. Therefore, closed gates to him. But imports . . . why put bars against the satisfaction of our own needs? Even there the answer isn't difficult. For the War himself is a hungry god. He is to be fed before ourselves if his favor is to come to us. And in the present instance his need is men, and there can be no men without ships.

That is the business of the Bureau of Imports of the War Trade Board. It has its fingers stretched over the whole world, diverting traffic from rubber and ivory and rice and wool to men. America still needs the products of the world. But it is a need that must be answered with discretion. The Bureau of Imports is discretion in concrete terms. No ship can clear from Calcutta or Yokohama or Melbourne unless the Bureau of Imports gives the magic sesame. It sounds difficult, but it isn't.

Clearance for America needs the visa of an American consular agent. And to visa is forthcoming unless the ambitious master can give the invoicing consul the number of his United States import license. And the wrong number would only facilitate failure, for incoming licensed cargoes must tally with the numbers issued at Washington, and the unlicensed freight would arrive merely to lie on a dock and rot there.

Reduced to simplicity as it may be in description, there can be no mistaking that it is a tremendous job. At one end there are the ships—the ships that must be caught one way or another and brought into use for men. At the other end are

the imports that may be still allowed. Reluctant shipowners and masters must be compelled to other paths. And the restricted bulk of importation must be apportioned fairly and faithfully to the hungry trade. If a staple article is to be cut down from 15,000 tons, its normal figure, to 5,000 tons, who is to get the 5,000? The trade must be organized to do the apportioning. Sometimes the importer is cut out altogether, and the manufacturer gets his goods directly from their sources. All this more or less enters into that new word of the industrial vocabulary, "allocation." And there are prices to be restricted, to keep the sensitive and trembling market from falling to chaotic pieces.

The results are illuminating, illuminating of human qualities as much as anything. "Empty bottoms—empty bottoms on the backhaul," is the wail that arises out of the South Sea Islands from shippers who are disconsolate at the sight of new profits vanishing into a dusky ocean because the Bureau of Imports of the War Trade Board of the United States of America doesn't see fit to license certain cargoes out of the East.

"True enough. They are empty bottoms," comments Fred B. Peterson in his quiet office. "But that's to show them we mean business. How many ships are going back there once we show them they've got to come away empty? And if we gave in just once, back they'd go again for more."

And yet another end to this new system—in effect an extraordinary and important end. Paraphrasing Wordsworth, it's "the difference to us." For out of a life where every material in the world sought us out for our plentiful dollars we are suddenly shifted into a life that faces restrictions on thousands of imported commodities.

## Regulating Modern Desires and Tastes

The new phases of the American import business began last November, when President Wilson issued his first proclamation under the authority of the trading with the enemy act, forbidding the importation of certain essential commodities except by license. A second proclamation was issued on February 14 of this year extending the import license to all commodities entering the United States. The proclamations themselves were of news moment at the time. But they are interesting now only as indications of the multiplied quality of modern life, and manifest by their saturation of facts something of the complexity of modern desires, demands and tastes. For actual illumination of the subject they must defer to the more ample and complete lists later issued by the War Trade Board, outlining the conditions under which certain importations could be made and presenting an actual picture of the importing business as it has come to exist for the United States.

The first of these lists was published on March 23, something more than a month after the President's complete restriction by proclamation. The proclamation achieved the important and immediate end of conserving shipping. The secondary aim of the government was to save



The Leviathan, formerly the Vaterland, sketched as she lay in a French port by Henri Rousseau for "L'Illustration"

## Cargoes

By JOHN MASEFIELD

shipping with as little injury as possible to commerce and industry, and the modification of the complete restriction was brought about on this basis by the publication of the War Trade Board's first list.

These conditions were outlined as the circumstances on which importation could be made:

When the articles mentioned were shipped from abroad prior to April 15, 1918.

When coming by rail from Mexico or Canada when the goods in question originated in those countries or in others from which such goods were being licensed for import.

When coming as a return cargo from European ports, and then only when coming from a convenient port; when loaded without delay and when the importation from Europe was not specifically prohibited in the list.

All imports, even if not listed, to be licensed.

The list, which included eighty-two separate classifications, ran as follows:

Agricultural implements.  
Animals, live, except for breeding purposes.  
Art works.  
Auctioneer.  
Beads and ornaments.  
Blackening, and all preparations for cleaning and polishing glass.  
Manufactures of bone and horn.  
All breadstuffs except wheat and wheat flour, including imports from Europe.  
Bronze corn.  
Candle pitch, palm and other vegetable tallow.  
Cars, carriages and other vehicles.  
Cattle.  
All acids.  
Muriate of ammonia.  
Ammonia, except not to exceed five long tons for remainder of 1918.  
All salts of soda except nitrate of soda and cyanide of soda.  
Sulfur, ground or unground.  
Chicory root, raw or roasted.  
Clocks and watches and parts thereof.  
Combs and combs, prepared or manufactured.  
Manufactures of cotton.  
Cotton, except not to exceed 2,000 long tons for the year 1918.  
Dials.  
Dice, draughts, chessmen, billiard balls, poker chips.  
Eggs of poultry.  
Explosives, except fulminates and gunpowder.  
Feathers, natural and artificial.  
Furniture.  
Manufactures of vegetable fibres and textile goods, except jute.  
Fishhooks, rods and reels, artificial bait.  
Flour.  
All fruits except pineapples and bananas.  
All nuts except coconuts and products thereof.  
Gelatine and manufactures thereof, including all from Europe.

Gold and silver manufactures, including jewelry.  
Sulphur oil or olive foot.  
Grease.  
Hay.  
Honey.  
Hops.  
Infusorial and diatomaceous earth and tripoli.  
Mantles for gas burners.  
Matches, friction and lucifer.  
Fresh meats.  
Meerschaum, crude or manufactured.  
Musical instruments and parts thereof.  
Nickel.  
Oil cake.  
Oleoth and linoleum for floors.  
All expressed vegetable oils, from Europe only.  
Lemon oil.  
Non-metallic paints and varnishes.  
Pencils and pencil leads.  
Perfumery and essences.  
Photographs, gramophones, graphophones and parts thereof.  
Photographic goods.  
Pipes and smokers' articles.  
Plants, trees, shrubs and vines.  
Plaster, electric, stereotype and lithographic, engraved.  
Plumbago or graphite (until July 1, 1918; thereafter not exceeding five long tons for remainder of 1918).  
Pyrites (except not exceeding 125,000 long tons in October 1, 1918).  
Rennet.  
Artificial silk and manufactures thereof.  
Sapphires.  
Soft liquors, including all from Europe.  
Wines.  
Other beverages, including all from Europe.  
Candy and confectionery, including all from Europe.  
Tar and pitch of wood.  
Tents.  
Umbrellas, parasols, sunshades and sticks for.  
Beans and lentils, from Europe only.  
Dried peas, from Europe only.  
All vegetables, except beans and lentils, and peas, either in their natural state or prepared or preserved, including all from Europe.  
Vinegar.  
Whalebone, unmanufactured.  
Manufactures of wool.  
Manufactures of hair of camel, goat and man.  
Zinc.

The second list of restrictions, which may be had in No. 9 of May 1 of the War Trade Board Journal, was issued on April 22. A statement which accompanied the list said that expert calculation and study estimated that restrictions "introduced" by the second list would result in a yearly saving of about 157,000 dead weight tonnage. Accompanying this estimate was the figure of total imports in 1917 of the commodities involved, amounting to 710,000 long tons. The statement then continued:

"The restrictions will not operate to cut off entirely imports in the commodities included in the list, and mention of a commodity does not necessarily entail any appreciable shortage of the commodity in question. This is due to the fact that only small quantities of certain commodities are imported by sea; of others we have adequate supplies available in this country or which can be imported from adjacent countries or under the backhaul privilege from convenient European ports.

"Of some of the commodities, such as condensed milk, for example, we have even an exportable surplus."

The largest individual item on the list of savings is quebracho wood—about 28,000 tons. This wood, used in tanning, can still be imported when carried as deckload or in ves-

sels unfit for essential imports. This will enable ships to bring in a large proportion of the 1917 imports while setting free cargo space for essential purposes. (Quebracho extract is not on the list.)

A large saving (24,000 tons) is also effected in paper, crude paper stock, and manufactures of paper, although wood pulp and books and other printed matter are excepted. The "long haul" here plays a considerable role, as a large part of the paper stock was brought from East India.

In the general category of minerals a saving of about 35,000 dead-weight tons is effected. Total imports of the minerals specified amounted to 265,000 long tons in 1917, large amounts of which, particularly of lead, are not affected by the restriction, coming, as they do, from sources to which the prohibitions do not apply. Among the edible substances mentioned are fish, dairy products, dried, preserved, and frozen eggs, meat products and preserved meats, including sausages, bacon, ham, etc., tea waste, and edible substances of minor importance which do not receive special classification under the tariff lists.

Other commodities are glass and glassware, though precautions are taken to insure the country's supply for optical purposes; cork and manufactures thereof, though the largest part of the cork comes under permitted imports from the Mediterranean and Channel ports; licorice root, in which a saving of 10,000 tons is effected; and bones, hoofs and horns, in which the restriction saves 10,000 dead-weight tons of shipping.

The list itself was printed in this form:

No import licenses for shipments made after May 1, 1918, will be granted for articles on this list, except as specifically herein provided. These provisions authorize the importation of the specified commodities only when the goods originate in one of the countries designated in the particular provision covering such commodity, and do not permit the importation of goods originating in other countries but coming through such designated countries.

Licenses for the following articles may be granted only for shipments coming from Canada and Mexico:

Time.

Tide and seashore.

Licenses for the following article may be granted only for shipments coming from Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador:

Shellfish. (Does not include crab meat from Japan.)

Licenses for the following article may be granted only for shipments coming from Canada and Mexico:

Molybdenum.

Licenses for the following article may be granted only for shipments coming from Cuba and West Indies:

Tobacco leaf.

Licenses for the following articles may be granted only for shipments coming from Canada, Mexico, Newfoundland and Labrador:

Fish, fresh, cured or preserved.

Licenses for the following articles will not be granted for shipments from European countries, but may be granted for shipments from all other countries:

Animal oils.

Licenses for the following articles will be granted only for shipments coming overland or by lake from Canada or coming overland from Mexico:

Alumite and boro-carbide.

Books.

Consent for building purposes.

Thousands of line.

Crystals of soda.

Paraffin.

Terminations and spigotings.

Lead.

Meat products and preserved meats.

Paraffin.

Pumice.

Steroids.

Stones and manufactures thereof.

Licenses for the following articles will be granted only for shipments coming (a) overland or by lake from Canada; (b) overland from Mexico; (c) returning cargo from European countries; and then only when shipped from a convenient port and when loaded without undue delay:

Argols, or wine lees.

Bones, hoofs and horns, unmanufactured.

Residue of wood, bamboo, straw or compositions of wood.

Cork, unmanufactured, and manufactures thereof.

Edible substances, not specifically provided for in the tariff schedules.

Eggs, dried, frozen, prepared or preserved, and shells of eggs.

Furs.

Fur's earth.

Furniture.

Furs and manufactures thereof. (Does not include fur hats, fur not on the skin prepared for hat use, nor raw seal skins from Uruguay.)

Glass and glassware. (Does not include lenses, opera and field glasses, optical instruments, spectacles, eyeglasses, goggles, surveying instruments, telescopes, microscopes and plates or disks for use in the manufacture of optical goods.)

Glue and glue size.

Gun stock and ramrod cuttings.

Hair, human, and manufactures thereof.

Horsehair, artificial, and manufactures thereof.

Indigo, synthetic.

Ivory, animal, and manufactures thereof.

Leather, raw, and manufactures thereof.

Moss and seaweed.

Paper and manufactures thereof. (Does not include books and other printed matter.)

Paper stock, crude. (Does not include wood pulp.)

Straw and grass, unmanufactured, and manufactures thereof.

Tea waste, sittings or sweepings.

Varnishes.

Licenses for the following article may be granted from any country, but only for shipments coming as deck cargo or coming on vessels unfit for essential imports:

Quebracho wood.

All outstanding licenses to import the above articles from any country from which under the above announcement, licenses for such articles will be granted, shall expire and become void unless ocean shipment thereunder is made on or before May 13, 1918.

Manufactures of bone and horn. (Import from European countries articles covered by above items numbered 122 to 145, inclusive, and all outstanding licenses for quebracho wood shall expire and become void unless ocean shipment thereunder is made on or before May 13, 1918. As to these, new applications may be made for shipments after May 13, 1918.)

The restrictions on great and important commodities began to follow soon after. On May 1 the Bureau of Imports restricted the issuance of licenses for the importation of crude rubber from overseas to a total of 25,000 tons from May 6 to July 31.

If any of this total amount is left after the requirements of the government and the Allies have been met it will be allocated among the manufacturers. After that came wheat and wheat flour, requiring all importations to come under the supervision of their distribution of the food administration. Coffee was regulated next, with respect to the rate at which it should be carried, fixed by the Shipping Board. The Bureau of Imports has been adding industriously to its record. The following gives the list of changes in the restrictions up to and including July 2:

COMMODITIES PREVIOUSLY UNRESTRICTED, NOW RESTRICTED WHOLLY OR PARTIALLY:

Asphalt.

Cashin or lactene.

Caster beans and castor oil.

Chromite.

Coconut meat.

Copper ore.

Corundum.

Cotton, Egyptian.

Emerald.

Caffeine, caffeine, theine, trimethylxanthine.

Cashin or lactene.

Caster beans and castor oil.

Chromite.

Coconut meat.

Copper ore.

Corundum.

Cotton, Egyptian.

Emerald.

Gutta percha, gutta serena, gutta serena, balata.

Opium.

Hides, skins, leather, tanned skins and manufactures of leather.

Iron ore.

Kapok.

Monazite sand.

Rubber.

Rubber manufactured goods.

Tanning materials.

Veneer ivory or Tania nuts.

COMMODITIES ENTIRELY REMOVED FROM RESTRICTED LISTS NOS. 1 AND 2:

Cabani nuts.

Paper hats and paper hat board.

Palm oil.

Rice, removed April 12, again restricted May 15 as to importation on or before August 31, 1918. Permitted amount already allocated. Watch crystals.

MODIFICATIONS OR CHANGES IN RESTRICTED LISTS NOS. 1 AND 2:

Change of line from Cuba, certain amount permitted.

Change of line from France, importation not of from certain ports.

Change of line from certain ports.

Change of line from certain ports.

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